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his return to Berlin, could be given to the world. Once more at home, Mendelssohn was of course urged by his family to recount over and over again the events of his journey; but as he always preferred to speak in music, his descriptions generally ended by his seating himself at the pianoforte, and with his fingers reproducing those impressions for the due expression of which words appeared to him too feeble. On one of these occasions the legend of Fingal's Cave was spoken of. "Describe the fairy to us," said Rebecca; while Fanny playfully added, "But it must be a long detailed story to make us comprehend how and when it all occurred." On which Felix answered,—“The legend cannot be described by commonplace words, and you know that I am no poet, so I will play it over to you, and then you can tell me afterwards whether you saw and understood it all thoroughly.” Thus was produced the wonderfully imaginative overture to the Hebrides.

The letters in which the young composer describes his thoughts and feelings, as well as poor words would allow, during his travels in Italy and Switzerland, are now common property; and it is an undoubted sign of the interest felt in all that relates to Mendelssohn by an English public, that these letters, in their translated form, have been most extensively read in this country. Letters such as these, however, are written in those comparatively calm moments when the enthusiasm called up by the wonders of nature and art has partially subsided; and it is only, therefore, by those persons who have been in intimate communication with Mendelssohn that his true mental photograph can be handed down to posterity. It is with this feeling that we welcome these reminiscences of Madame Polko; for in them we find so many little incidents connected not only with the artistic, but with the domestic daily life of the composer, that we seem to be actually living in close companionship with him. In the hospitable and intellectual family of W—, Mendelssohn spent much of his time; and the charming fresh voices of the two young daughters of his host inspired the composer, perhaps almost unconsciously, with many of his most beautiful songs. "Those evenings," writes Madame Polko, "in the society of the W— family were Felix's greatest recreation and refreshment. When Ferdinand and the girls sang, Felix played with Rietz, the distinguished violoncello player, or extemporised before this select circle so beautifully on themes he had just heard, that he enchanted every one, young and old. There, too, they played at forfeits, when Mendelssohn always seemed the merriest and most childlike of them all. Those who saw him flying about, dancing so gaily with young girls and married women, or with bandaged eyes guessing who touched him, and laughing amid all the confusion of merry voices, could scarcely realise that a few hours later this very same man—his thoughts as far removed from this mirthful scene as the heavens from the earth—his head bent over the text of *St. Paul*, just received from his friend Pastor Schubring, was writing down those sublime melodies destined to flash through the world like rays of light."

Madame Polko's personal recollections of Mendelssohn date from the first appearance of the eminent contralto singer, Sophie Schloss. She relates that, walking on the Promenade at Leipzig, she was startled by her father saying to her, "Look! here comes Mendelssohn and his wife." Of course this meeting was, to her, one of the greatest events of her

life, as she had but just left school, and Leipzig was then ringing with the praises of the young composer. Her adoration of Mendelssohn increased with her years; and she gives many conclusive proofs of his gentle and kind nature, as evidenced by his encouraging treatment of all young and inexperienced artists with whom he was brought personally in contact. Speaking of his playing, she says: "Even now, in some compositions that I had the good fortune to hear played by Mendelssohn, my spirit seems, when others are playing them to me, to hear distinctly *him*, and *him alone*, for no other hand can efface the impression I received from his execution of particular melodies, and more especially some of his 'Songs without words'; so at length my physical ear seems to hear those very tones once more." That the artist—whatever may be the art through which he speaks to the world—is by nature sympathetic with all intellectual progress, in whatever form it may appear, seems to be no more admitted as a rule in Germany than it is in this country. Speaking of Mendelssohn, Madame Polko says: "He could be very irritable when people thought they were bound to converse with him exclusively about *music*; in the same way that nothing is more depressing to an author than to make his works the incessant topic of conversation. 'As if I were incapable of talking on any other subject than my profession,' said he, sometimes, with amusing indignation." We should be glad if these words could sink deeply into the heart of a certain English writer, who has latterly, in the pages of a magazine, shown that literary men are as ignorant of musicians as they usually are of music.

Our limited space prevents our making further extracts from a volume which, as we have already said, has afforded us much pleasure. Madame Polko's reminiscences are followed by some interesting letters of Mendelssohn, never before published, amongst which will be found three written to Mr. Brewer, the Secretary of the Sacred Harmonic Society, on the subject of the first performance of *Elijah*, and one to Mr. Alfred Novello, written in English. The work is well translated by Lady Wallace; and is rendered doubly valuable by an excellent and life-like portrait of Mendelssohn.

GENOA.

MAESTRO LAVAGNINO's Seventh Concert of the present season, consisted of a selection from the works of the ancient Italian Composers: comprising two fine old Gregorian chants, "Iste Confessor" and "O Fili"; Palestrina's "O bone Jesu;" Michael d'Este's Madrigal, "How merrily we live;" Stradella's sacred air, "Pietà, Signore;" Converso's Madrigal, "When all alone;" Salvatore Rosa's two graceful canzonets, "Star vicino a colei" and "Vado ben spesso;" Corelli's pianoforte Concerto, "La Natività;" Scarlatti's "Aria per Pianoforte;" Clari's two-part Madrigal, "Cantando un dì;" Buononcini's Arietta, "Per la gloria d'adorarvi;" Gastoldi's Ballata, "Viver lieto voglio;" one of Clementi's Pianoforte Sonatas; Lotti's Arietta, "Pur mi dicesti;" Cimarosa's buffo duet, "Se fiato in corpo avete;" and Martini's comic chorus, "Vadasi via di quà."

This revival of pieces, all selected from the great Italian school of Art was—strange to say—peculiarly a novelty in Italy, and created a special interest in Genoa. Modern lovers of music, among Italians, are scarcely cognizant of the treasures that exist in their own national composers of by-gone times; they are vaguely proud of the great musicians' names belonging to Italy, but they hardly know Palestrina's works from Clari's, Leonardo Leo's, or Marcelllo's from Padre Martini's, having never heard a note of either. A performance, therefore, introducing modern

Italians to a selection of pieces from their own illustrious antique composers, proved both an interesting performance and a welcome curiosity in art.

The programme of the concert included brief but comprehensive annotations on each composer that figured in the selection. The amateur ladies and gentlemen, who were carefully practised in the various concerted pieces, did themselves great credit; singing with a precision and smoothness that did full justice to the several compositions they performed. The young *prima donna*, Signora Robiati, who is a pupil of the Conservatorio at Milan, sang the soprano solos with much merit; and Mrs. Thompson executed the pianoforte pieces with her usual excellence, and was warmly applauded.

FLORENCE.

THE Concert of the Society for the study of Classical Music, on the 26th of December, was brilliantly successful. Bazzini's "56th Psalm of David," created quite a sensation; and the composer was called forward to receive the congratulations of the audience. The execution of the work was excellent, both as regards vocalists and instrumentalists, the gradations of tone being observed with the utmost care throughout. The vocal parts were entrusted to Signors Luigi Robles (tenor), Cresci (barytone), and Federighi (bass). An Orchestral Symphony (overture), intended to serve as an introduction to Alfieri's Tragedy, *Saul*, also by Bazzini, was another important feature in the programme, and was received with marked and well merited applause. This composition gained the first prize given by the Quartett Society, of Milan, in the competition 1867. Amongst the choice, though crowded audience, there were several celebrities, and many of the best musical amateurs.

THE Annual Assembly of Parish Choirs of Oxford and the surrounding neighbourhood is fixed for Wednesday, the 16th June, and will be held as usual in Christ Church Cathedral. The Anthems selected are—for the morning, "Lord, for Thy tender mercies' sake" (Farrant), and for the afternoon, "How excellent Thy Name" (Handel). The music selected for the morning is Anglican, the Litany will be sung, and Hymns are to be used in the place of Processional Psalms. In the afternoon the service is to be Gregorian, the Canticles being Dr. Stainer's harmonised arrangements of the Parisian Tones.

THE Southwark Musical Society gave its usual Christmas performance of the *Messiah*, on the 23rd Dec., in the Memorial Church, New Kent Road. The solo vocalists were Misses Robertine Henderson, Lucie Harris, Mr. Montem Smith, and Mr. Marler. The orchestra comprised 38 instrumentalists, and upwards of 120 vocalists, conducted by Mr. Josias Wells. Several papers pronounce the performance to have been a complete success.

THE first of a series of eight Concerts, in aid of the Great Northern Hospital, Caledonian Road, was given at the Hanover Square Rooms, on the 12th ult., with much success. Miss Edith Wynne, Miss Blanche Reeves, Madlle. Romanelli, Miss Palmer, Mr. Wilbye Cooper, &c., were amongst the vocalists who assisted in the performance; and Mr. B. Wells (flute) and Mr. Griesbach (violin) performed solos with the utmost effect. Several pieces were also well sung by a choir, under the direction of Mr. E. Craig. We sincerely trust that the funds of the hospital may be materially benefited by these concerts, which are worthy of support on their own intrinsic merits.

MR. HENRY LESLIE's prospectus for the coming season has just been issued. Out of the six concerts to be given, two will be orchestral, the others being devoted to the performance of madrigals, part-songs, and unaccompanied music, for the singing of which this choir

has been so long and so deservedly celebrated. The first concert, on the 4th inst., will include Mendelssohn's music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the same composer's pianoforte concerto, in D minor, to be played by Madame Schumann; Samuel Wesley's fine motett, "In exitu Israel," and Schubert's "Song of Miriam." At the second concert a short work, by Mr. G. A. Macfarren, called "Songs in a Cornfield," will be performed for the first time.

THE Annual Report of the Birmingham Amateur Harmonic Association shows that the Society is in a highly prosperous condition; for although the present year is the one immediately following the Birmingham Triennial Festival, there has been no diminution in the number of members, as was too often the case on former occasions. Amongst the works rehearsed, we find Beethoven's *Mass in D*, Mendelssohn's *Antigone* and *Loreley*, Schubert's *Grand Mass in E flat*, and many other important works. The financial position of the Association is also thoroughly satisfactory; and the members of the committee have every reason to congratulate themselves upon the result of their indefatigable endeavours to promote the interest of the Society, and the advancement of good music in Birmingham.

AN interesting lecture was given, on the 13th ult., at the Literary and Scientific Institution, Hackney, by the Rev. John Curwen, on "Some views of music as an art and a science, suggested by the Tonic Sol-fa method of teaching it." Charles Reed, Esq., M.P., occupied the chair. During the evening some satisfactory exhibitions of readiness in composing and singing at sight were given by disciples of the Sol-fa system.

THE prize of Ten Guineas offered by the Hibernian Catch Club (the most ancient musical Society now existing in the kingdom), has been adjudged to Dr R. P. Stewart. The competition was open to all composers: 33 glees were sent in. The successful composition was sung by Messrs. Hemsley, Peele, Smith, and B. Mullen.

THE *Messiah* was given by the City Choral Union, at Albion Hall, on Monday, the 4th ult., the solo artists being Miss Blanche Reeves, Miss Riseam, Mr. Greenhill, and Mr. Albert Hubbard; Trumpet, Mr. Dearden. The choruses were given with great precision; and reflected much credit upon the able conductor, Mr. Salmon. All the solos were excellently rendered; and it was with difficulty that the hearers resisted the temptation to demand several encores.

We are pleased to record that Mr. W. P. Aylward, music-seller, and organist of St. Martin's Church, and for many years a resident of Salisbury, has been unanimously elected Mayor of that city. Mr. Aylward is father of our excellent London performer on the violoncello.

THE Annual *réunion* of Tonic Sol-faists has just been concluded at the Literary Institution, in Aldersgate Street. These meetings are designed to raise the educational status of teachers; and the proceedings included model lessons for criticism, and lectures on musical composition, harmony, and musical history. The series included lectures by Mr. Curwen, on the recent adaptation of the Tonic Sol-fa method to the musical tuition of the blind, and on "Definite Ideas of transition and chromatic chords;" by Mr. Proudman, on the present relation of the method to instruments; by Mr. Cowley, on the study of orchestral scores; a model lesson on the violin, by Mr. McNaught, and a lecture by Mr. Proudman, on "A comparison of the popular choral music of England and France."

A Concert was lately given, by the English Glee Union, at St. Mary's School-room, Hammersmith, in aid of the school funds, which attracted a very large audience. The glees and part songs were rendered in